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indirectly cultivates untruthfulness, for truth requires self-sacrifice, which luxury makes impossible. Much intercourse with strangers, and frequent changes of environment, encourage it, because opportunity is given of making "first impressions" consciously. Frequent novelty probably tends to develop one of its most incurable forms—that in which there is a constant craving for new sensations to be obtained at any cost.

[Professor Stanley Hall's conclusion seems to be that the excitement, luxury, craving for novelty, desire to show off and love of heightened effects, which characterise American Society,—all tend to encourage untruthful tendencies in children and to hinder the growth of habits of truthfulness. And who can say, that the faults he ascribes to American society are not to be found in our own?] He would have the children shielded as far as possible from these influences, and held to long and firm responsibility for their words and actions, encouraged to fall back on their best, their true self, and to be accepted for what they really are by nature and by heredity. Thus would the foundation be laid for new intellectual insight, purer emotional satisfaction, greater energy in action, perhaps even physical betterment in certain temperaments,—in short, for a general moral reformation of such a kind as would not be unworthy to be called Regeneration.

HOW TO TEACH THE BIBLE TO OUR CHILDREN.

BY THE REV. HENRY SEELEY.

NO. II.

THE painstaking study of the elements of any subject is highly important, if we would make satisfactory progress in our subsequent efforts. For any of the main purposes of education the careful training of the infant mind is not to be neglected. Wrong habits are often formed in the very earliest years, wrong principles are often implanted, wrong notions somehow find place in the baby brain that years are required to eradicate, and such errors often remain through life. This is true of secular matters and of ordinary behaviour. It is now an axiom of educationists that it is not *anyone* who can teach and train the little ones, and the "teacher of babes" is therefore required to have special aptitude and special knowledge for the foundation work. It is for these reasons that all good Sunday School superintendents would desire the most competent teachers to take the gallery class.

Now, considering what the Bible is, and remembering what we have already said as to its difference from other books, we must lay much stress on Scripture teaching to infants. There is no other department of the instruction of childhood that involves so much, and there is no other set of subjects to be taught, that needs so thoroughly to be brought to bear on the early thoughts and years of juvenile life both for present and future requirements. Let me not be misunderstood. Neither in infancy, nor in any other period of growth, ought there to be such a superabundance of Bible teaching as should lead to mental and spiritual weariness. If our children should, through any error on the part of their instructors, acquire a distaste for history, for example, in comparison with other subjects that they learn, we should grievously deplore it as a calamity that ought to have been avoided. The same thing may also be said in their degree of any of the accomplishments. But by any means whatever

to get a dislike for the Bible, will be an evil that can in no sense be balanced by any other kind of knowledge. Unless by God's grace the dislike be removed in after years, there will be for ever an incalculable spiritual loss.

I do not hesitate, therefore, in this short series of papers, to dwell longer on the teaching of the Bible to quite little children, though we may rise to a higher stage in our topic than we reached before.

Having shown last month the necessity of care in the selection of Bible pictures and books about the Bible, there remains, ere we pass on, another caution to be borne in mind, that would not so readily occur to us as bearing on our question. I refer to the phraseology of hymns and prayers, from which our children often imbibe many fixed beliefs likely to defeat our efforts after accurate teaching both of fact and doctrine. As all teaching on sacred subjects, is, or ought to be, in some degree, Bible teaching, nothing can be safely overlooked which tells directly on our specific theme. Particularly referring for this reason to what is learned from hymns, it seems a pity to have to write against anything from the pens, for instance, of such gifted authors as Jane Taylor and Isaac Watts, who did so much to familiarize Scripture truth by hymns and poems suited to the capacities of the most ignorant. But, while acknowledging the church's debt of gratitude to them and others like them, let me, by a sample or two, show the need of care in this department also; and I will not forget that the teaching of the Bible is my subject. A favourite hymn of Jane Taylor's shall be quoted:—

"When little Samuel woke,
And heard his Maker's voice,
At every word He spoke
How much did he rejoice!"

And on Samuel's rejoicing is grounded a moral sufficiently obvious, as to the gladness with which a child should attend to the word of God. Now as, under the circumstances of the narrative in i. Samuel iii., the child-minister neither did, nor could rejoice, it is not right to draw such an application from that chapter.

Dr. Watts's hymn "There is above the sky," is, I think, only calculated to do harm, especially when the way of

salvation is stated in the following terms, nothing being said of forgiveness through Jesus Christ:—

"Then will I read and pray,
While I have life and breath;
Lest I should be cut off to-day,
And sent to eternal death."

Such words might naturally lead in after years either to religious melancholy or to infidelity.

Hymns and sacred poems have done much to deform as well as to form the ideas with which we read our Bibles, and are, in this respect, to be classed with pictures in their good or bad influences. Of the historical kind, some for the Epiphany, *e.g.*, "As with gladness men of old," "Brightest and best of the sons of the morning," are incorrect as to the visit of the Magi, who came to "the house," not to the manger in the inn of Bethlehem. Many groundless notions current among us with regard to heaven and the unseen world are founded exclusively on hymns, not on the statements of the Bible. Some of us remember the sensation caused by a book called "The Gates Ajar," which, amid much that was erroneous, had also useful protests against the unscriptural sabbatarianism that was wont to describe eternal bliss as consisting in the alleged fact that it is found

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

These general observations apply to the conventionalities so often seen in books of prayers, but which need no further reference here. I have expatiated on such matters, inasmuch as the Bible itself has very generally been considered to contain many things that are only to be read in other books, and more might be added to the same purpose concerning much that finds place in religious literature at large.

One of our public school head-masters said that the first thing a boy has to do in learning Latin at school is very usually to unlearn what his governess has taught him in "preparatory" teaching. Is it not the case that in our Bible studies most of us have to unlearn very much, especially in the way of vague impressions, as to what the Bible is supposed to teach, which impressions have come to us from all sorts of sources except from the actual reading of the Bible itself? Both in history and in doctrine many of

our most deeply rooted errors have been acquired from our infant misunderstandings, or the ignorance of our teachers, or often from the inaccuracy so frequently excused by well-meaning instructors under the plea that children will know better when they are older; but that there are many things which they cannot be expected to understand (which, however, can often best be learned in early childhood), or, worse and worse, that the mode of teaching for such little ones doesn't matter much so that they are kept good and amused!

To illustrate what I have been saying, I give an extract from Bishop Titcomb's "Cautions for Doubters." He writes:—"How often have men of science been driven into scepticism by the adherence of theologians to the belief that the Bible teaches the age of the world to be only 6,000 years, when, in reality, it does no such thing. . . . And again, that we must needs believe from Scripture in the recomposition of our bodies at the general resurrection, out of the identical particles which belonged to them ages before, although, by the chemistry of nature, many of those particles must have become absorbed into a succession of other bodies also! The reiteration of such statements as these, as though they were the necessary teachings of the Bible, has produced much needless antagonism to Revelation."

Such errors are now-a-days rarely taught by the clergy. But it is to be feared that the teaching of the Bible in the teacher's own words, without sufficient care to be accurate, and in the sometimes almost desperate effort to be simple, is perpetuating this sad preparation for misbelief and unbelief in after years. And in the doctrines which are commonly held on the subjects of sin and salvation, the necessity of the new birth and of the great work of the Lord Jesus, the hopeless confusion or fatal ignorance in which the clergy continually find people of all classes, and notably in examinations before confirmations, must undoubtedly be largely due either to the slipshod negligence of the teachers of the young, or to the absolutely false teaching which is given by those *who ought to know better*. Here are some errors only too common in nurseries, in school-rooms, and in Sunday schools: "God will not love you if you are naughty." (Contrast John iii. 16, Romans v. 8.) "Good people will go to heaven, wicked people will go to hell"; a misleading travesty of Hebrews xii., 14, to be found taught in Watts's

hymn before-mentioned. The doctrine as wrongly stated is taken to mean, and is generally intended to mean, that if children try to do their best, and avoid disobedience, falsehood, and other gross faults, God will be so pleased with them that He will take them to heaven when they die. The whole of the true preaching of the gospel is in opposition to this creed, which is merely the code of virtue of the most philosophic heathenism, and is wholly irrespective of Christianity. If we mean to teach the Bible, we shall not, and cannot, teach this unpractical figment.

The reader will, perhaps, think that overmuch has been said thus far as to how *not* to teach, rather than how to teach, the Bible. But all experience shows that like the "rubbish" that delayed the building of the wall of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah, there are many things that profess to aid in the teaching of the Bible which we must carefully remove as obstacles instead of helps, if we would surely gain the end we have in view. It is, however, hoped that many useful suggestions have been conveyed for positive work, though put by way of caution in the negative form.

The chief thing for the parent or teacher to do in order to the successful instruction of the young in the Bible, is to become acquainted with the Book itself. It would be most discouraging to have to study all kinds of books about the Bible, before we can hope usefully to begin our work of imparting our knowledge. Some books may however be mentioned in another paper as particularly adapted to aid us in our study of the scriptures. For the present I may conclude with a few lines from Bishop Horsley, which may well guide and comfort those who desire to learn in order to teach:—"It is incredible to any one who has not made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, by studying the scriptures with reference to the parallel passages, without any other commentary or exposition than that which the different parts of the sacred volume mutually furnish for each other. Let the most illiterate Christian study them in this manner, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by whom these books were dictated, and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian's faith."